

Literary Period Test

The Anglo-Saxons

Applying Skills

Like “The Seafarer,” “The Husband’s Message” is from the so-called *Exeter Book*. Many scholars believe that the speaker in this poem is a *rune stave*, a wood scrap on which a message has been engraved in runes (ancient Anglo-Saxon characters with simple lines that can be carved easily). The socially high-ranking husband and wife in this poem have sworn loyalty oaths and have been kept apart by a feud. Read the poem carefully, and then answer the questions that follow.

The Husband’s Message translated by Kevin Crossley-Holland

Now that we’re alone I can explain
The secret meaning of this stave. I was once a child.
But now one of the sons of men, living far from here,
Sends me on errands over the salt-streams,
5 Commands me to carry a cunningly-carved letter.
At my master’s command I have often crossed the sea,
Sailed in the ship’s hold to strange destinations.
And this time I have come especially
To sow assurance in your mind
10 About my lord’s great love for you.
I swear that you will find in him
Great faith to you, great loyalty.
O lady adorned with such lovely ornaments,
He who carved the words in this wood
15 Bids me ask you to remember
The oaths you swore so long ago together;
In those distant days you lived in the same country,
Lived in love together,
Sharing one estate in the beautiful city.
20 Then a feud, a cruel vendetta, forced him to leave
This land of happy people; I was told to tell you,
Joyfully, that you should undertake a journey
Just as soon as you hear the cuckoo’s sad song,
That mournful sound in the mountain woods.
25 After that, let no man delay you
Or stop you from sailing over the waves.
Go down to the sea, the home of the gull;
Sail south from here over the salt-streams
To the land where your lord waits in high expectations.
30 He nurses no greater wish in the world,
(With his own words he told me)
Than that both of you together, by the grace of God,
May give rings once again to men in the mead-hall;
Bestow gifts as before on companions
35 And warriors. He has won
Wealth enough, though he lives
Far away amongst a foreign people

- In a beautiful land.
Forced by the feud to launch his boat from here,
40 He went over the waves alone in his youth,
Set forth on the way of the flood, eager to
Depart and divide the quiet waters. Now at last your lord
Leaves his sorrows behind him. He will lack nothing,
Neither horses, nor treasure, nor joy in the mead-hall,
45 O daughter of the prince,
He will want nothing else in the world
If only he may have *you* for his own,
Fulfilling the former vow between you.
I hear the runes S. and R.,
50 EA., W. and M. join in an oath
That he will wait for you in that country,
And will always love you for as long as he lives,
Faithful and true to your vows to each other,
The oaths you swore so long ago together.

Vocabulary Skills: New Words in Context (20 points; 4 points each)

Each of the underlined words below has also been underlined in the selection. Re-read those passages and use context clues to help you select an answer. On the line to the left of each sentence, write the letter of the word or phrase that *best* completes each sentence.

- _____ 1. Cunningly (line 5) means that the letter was carved with
a. deception c. expertise
b. confusion d. no straight lines
- _____ 2. Sow (line 9) is another word for
a. farmer c. field
b. piglet d. plant
- _____ 3. Vendetta (line 20) refers to
a. a bitter quarrel
b. a vendor of rune staves
c. an offensive joke
d. a nasty satire
- _____ 4. When the husband nurses (line 30), he is
a. questioning the purpose of his life
b. holding a thought in his mind
c. discovering that he loves his wife
d. investigating the rune stave
- _____ 5. Bestow (line 34) means that the husband wants to
a. open gifts
b. request gifts
c. give gifts
d. reclaim gifts

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Vocabulary: Using Context Clues (10 points; 2 points each)

On the line provided, write the letter of the *best* answer to the following item.

- _____ 6. All of the following techniques can be used to discover a word's context **except**
- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| a. restatement | c. contrast |
| b. reversal | d. comparison |

Using context clues, choose the word or phrase that *best* defines the underlined word in each sentence. Write the letter of correct word or phrase on the line provided.

- _____ 7. The violence Beowulf does to Grendel is not gratuitous, or without cause.
- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| a. uncalled for | c. discussed |
| b. paid | d. complicated |
- _____ 8. Some people believe that the requirements for a hero are immutable, but others feel they change over time.
- | | |
|-----------------|------------|
| a. intricate | c. devoted |
| b. unchangeable | d. useful |
- _____ 9. The bard extols Beowulf as the most honorable of men and the bravest of warriors.
- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| a. escapes | c. discusses |
| b. praises | d. imitates |
- _____ 10. Aware of his privileged position, and the rights it gives him, Beowulf uses his prerogative to answer Unferth's challenge.
- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| a. strength | c. right |
| b. respect | d. fate |

Comprehension (25 points; 5 points each)

On the line provided, write the letter of the *best* answer to each of the following items.

- _____ 11. The husband's message on the rune stave is written by
- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. the husband | c. a mysterious stranger |
| b. a loyal retainer of the husband | d. a relative involved in the feud |
- _____ 12. "The Husband's Message" is primarily about
- | |
|---|
| a. a broken oath of loyalty |
| b. a difficult sea voyage |
| c. the loss of an important letter |
| d. the desire to be reunited with a loved one |
- _____ 13. Judging from what the speaker says about his master, the husband has
- | |
|--|
| a. prospered in a foreign land |
| b. experienced many misfortunes after the feud |
| c. become the captain of a large ship |
| d. taken his wife's rings and other ornaments |
- _____ 14. The husband wants his wife to
- | |
|-------------------------------|
| a. travel around the world |
| b. send their children to him |
| c. forget him |
| d. join him |

15. The tone of the poem can *best* be described as
- a. fearful
 - b. bitterly combative
 - c. lovingly sincere
 - d. apologetic

Reading Skills and Strategies: Using Context Clues (15 points)

16. Using context clues and the technique of restatement, retell the following lines from “The Husband’s Message” in your own words. In your restatement of unfamiliar terms, use words that are familiar to you. There is more than one possible answer.

“But now one of the sons of men, living far from here,
Sends me on errands over the salt-streams,
Commands me to carry a cunningly-carved letter.
At my master’s command I have often crossed the sea,
Sailed in the ship’s hold to strange destinations.”

Literary Elements
Elegy (15 points)

17. Although “The Husband’s Message” is not an elegy, it has elements that are elegiac. Which elements of “The Husband’s Message” would be appropriate in an elegy? In the left-hand side of the following chart, describe two different elements in the poem that would be suitable in an elegy. In the right-hand side of the chart, explain why those elements are elegiac.

Elegiac Elements in “The Husband’s Message”	Why Elements Would Be Appropriate in an Elegy
1.	1.
2.	2.

The Epic Hero (15 points)

18. In what ways does the husband exemplify the qualities of an epic hero? On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief essay in which you answer this question. Use at least two examples from “The Husband’s Message” to support your ideas.

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LITERARY ELEMENTS TEST, page 9

1. d 2. c 3. c 4. d 5. d
6. b 7. a 8. a 9. d 10. a
-

LITERARY PERIOD TEST, page 11

Vocabulary Skills

1. c 2. d 3. a 4. b 5. c

Vocabulary

6. b 7. a 8. b 9. b 10. c

Comprehension

11. a 12. d 13. a 14. d 15. c

Reading Skills and Strategies

16. *(Responses will vary. A sample response follows.)*

A man who lives in a distant land ordered me to deliver a cleverly carved letter to you. To accomplish this task, I crossed salty rivers. In the past, I often traveled across the sea at my employer's request. On these trips, my living quarters were below the ships' decks. I was sent to unusual places.

Literary Elements

17. *(Responses will vary. A sample response follows.)*

Elegiac Elements in "The Husband's Message"	Why Elements Would Be Appropriate in an Elegy
1. The husband was forced to leave his wife and home.	1. The husband has experienced years of wandering and sorrow. The subjects of sadness and loss are typical of elegies.
2. The wife is supposed to depart when she hears the cuckoo's "sad" and "mournful" sound.	2. This image implies that the wife's departure will not be entirely joyful. She will have to leave family and friends behind, even though she will look forward to seeing her husband again. Images that emphasize regret are common in elegies.

18. Responses will vary. In a model response, students should fulfill the following criteria:

- demonstrate understanding of the prompt
- clearly explain why the husband exemplifies the qualities of an epic hero
- support their ideas with at least two references to details in the poem. For example:
 - The husband has the high ideals that are typical of epic heroes. Even after years away from home, he still loves his wife enough to send for her; he keeps the oath they made long ago.
 - The husband also is generous and kind; he anticipates giving rings to his friends and warriors.
 - He is courageous, strong, and ambitious; he left home to sail across strange seas to unknown lands, and he established himself successfully in a foreign country.

THE MIDDLE AGES

LITERARY PERIOD INTRODUCTION TEST, page 15

1. b 2. a 3. c 4. a 5. b
6. d 7. d 8. d 9. c 10. b

Collection 2: The Gift of Story

Lord Randall *Edward, Edward* *Get Up and Bar the Door*

SELECTION TEST, page 17

Comprehension

1. d 2. c 3. b 4. a 5. c
6. d

Literary Elements

7. b 8. c 9. c 10. d